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General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

107th plenary meeting
Thursday, 12 July 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 1.05 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda, allocation of items and organization of work

The President: I should like to recall that, at its 9th plenary meeting on 11 September 2000, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 97 to the Second Committee. In order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this item, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to consider agenda item 97 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 97 (*continued*)

Training and research

(a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/989)

(b) Draft resolution (A/55/L.89)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Italy to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.89.

Mr. Francese (Italy): I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly draft resolution A/55/L.89, on the statute of the United Nations System Staff College. This draft is the result of consultations undertaken pursuant to resolution 54/228 of 1999, which culminated in resolution 55/207 of 2000. The latter resolution decided to establish the United Nations System Staff College as of 1 January 2002, after approval of its statute, and indicated its basic mission and purposes. That resolution requested that the Secretary-General continue consultations on an urgent basis with the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and relevant United Nations organizations, and that he submit, as early as possible, a final draft of the statute for the College. According to the resolution, the statute should reflect, as appropriate, the outcome of these consultations on functions, governance and funding for review and approval by the General Assembly, preferably at its fifty-fifth session.

As soon as the Secretary-General's report (A/55/989) was made available, the Chairman of the Second Committee convened a session of informal consultations on 20 June, finding a window of opportunity in the extremely busy calendar of the General Assembly. Ambassador Alexandru Niculescu of Romania deserves the deepest appreciation for his personal commitment and leadership, which made it possible to achieve an excellent text and overcome every difficulty, including last-minute red tape.

The main purpose of the informal consultations was to ascertain whether Member States were satisfied

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with the ACC's approach in terms of the functions, governance and funding of the College. This approach calls for "true ownership of the Staff College by the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system" (*A/55/989, para. 18*). The informal consultations cleared up any uncertainties over the meaning of the notion of ownership, particularly its resource implications, which was the only key issue whose details still had to be worked out after resolution 55/207 had been adopted by consensus. On 20 June last, therefore, it was possible to reach consensus on this issue, too.

For technical reasons, today's draft resolution is being presented only by Italy and Romania. As a matter of fact, after the recent informal consultations we were all under the impression that, to reflect the consensus achieved, the draft would be submitted to the General Assembly as a Chairman's text. This did not prove possible because of procedural constraints that emerged only later. This left too little time to organize another round of consultations with the co-sponsors.

When resolution 55/207 was adopted at the end of the main part of the current session, 95 countries, in addition to Italy and Romania, sponsored it. Today, it is fitting that they be mentioned by name once again: Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, Colombia, the Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mali, Malta, the Marshall Islands, Mexico, the Federated States of Micronesia, Monaco, Morocco, Nauru, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, the Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Venezuela.

Leaving technicalities aside, it is clear that those countries will all continue to be recognized as those whose constant support facilitated the successful completion of the procedures to establish the new United Nations System Staff College.

Those are the roots of the simple and self-explanatory draft resolution that I have the honour to introduce, in the hope that it may be adopted today.

Mr. Niculescu (Romania): It is a pleasure for me to be here in the General Assembly this afternoon with you, Mr. President, and with my colleagues — I suspect that all of them are from the Second Committee — to finalize another important initiative under your presidency. Last fall, when we decided, in resolution 55/207, to establish the United Nations System Staff College as from 1 January 2002, we also decided to leave some time for informal consultations on finalizing the statute of the Staff College. Pursuant to that resolution, I convened the informal consultations of the Second Committee on Wednesday, 20 June, in order to examine the draft statute of the College and to discuss a draft resolution that I presented on the subject. During those informal consultations, an agreement was reached *ad referendum*, both on the draft resolution and on the statute of the Staff College, and I sent details of that understanding to you, Mr. President.

I have nothing further to add, except to say how much I appreciated the cooperation of Italy. I reciprocate the kind words addressed to me by the representative of Italy, my good friend Pier Francese, and by other colleagues from the Second Committee, who were kind enough to agree *ad referendum* to our proposals. I submit this draft resolution to the Assembly for adoption today.

Since I suspect that this is the last time that I will be involved as Chairman of the Second Committee, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, very much for the continued support and collaboration that you have extended to me throughout my chairmanship and to thank all my colleagues for their cooperation and understanding.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.89, entitled "Statute of the United Nations System Staff College in Turin, Italy".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.89?

Draft resolution A/55/L.89 was adopted (resolution 55/278).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 97?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda, allocation of items and organization of work

The President: I should now like to recall for representatives that at its 9th plenary meeting, on 11 September 2000, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 102 to the Second Committee. In order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this item, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to consider agenda item 102 directly in plenary meeting?

I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 102?

I hear no objection.

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now proceed accordingly.

Agenda item 102 *(continued)*

Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 102.

In connection with agenda item 102, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/55/L.88.

I give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.88.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I have the pleasure of introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the least developed countries, entitled "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010", the text of which is contained in document A/55/L.88.

This Programme of Action and the accompanying Declaration are the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the most recent of the 10-yearly gatherings recommending policies and measures for economic and social development of the least developed countries. The Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001, dealt, through its seven commitments, with a wide range of issues for follow-up at the national, subregional, regional and global levels.

In order to give a final green light to commence the process of implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries without losing any more time, as we are already in the middle of the first year of the decade, it is necessary that we present this draft resolution during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. One of the first steps in this process will be taken by the ongoing session of the Economic and Social Council, which has a major responsibility in monitoring the effective implementation of the Programme of Action.

The least developed countries thank you, Mr. President, for providing us with the opportunity to adopt this procedural, but significantly important, draft resolution during this session.

Draft resolution A/55/L.88 contains one preambular and two operative paragraphs.

In its preambular paragraph, it recalls the resolutions adopted by the previous four successive General Assembly sessions, which decided on the holding of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and established its broad scope and parameters.

In the first operative paragraph, the draft endorses the outcome of the Conference: the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries 2001-2010.

In the last operative paragraph, the Assembly decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-sixth session the relevant agenda item under which the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference will be considered.

As I said, the present draft resolution is procedural in nature and is intended to endorse the two major documents adopted at the Conference. We will engage in more substantive discussion during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, when we will have before us the report of the Secretary-General on the question of arrangements for follow-up. Other documents relevant in this context will be A/CONF.191/L.5, which contains the G-77 position on section III of the Programme of Action, and the Declaration of the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels, contained in document A/55/1005.

The least developed countries are grateful to our fellow developing countries for their continued constructive engagement and for the political support extended to them throughout the Conference process. The present text enjoys the unanimous support of the least developed countries and of the Group of 77 and China, as formally extended to it at the meeting of the groups on 28 and 29 June, respectively.

The least developed countries also appreciate the role of our development partners and their support in promoting a positive outcome in Brussels and its subsequent implementation process.

I would take this opportunity to thank the European Union for hosting the Conference; Sweden, for its presidency during the Conference; and Belgium, not only for holding the conference in Brussels, but also for its current European Union presidency, when implementation of the Programme will be set in motion.

We thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his continued support to the least developed countries and for his personal presence and the rich statement he made at the Conference.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), as the Secretary-General of the Conference, and his secretariat deserve our appreciation for providing all the necessary support for the conference.

Our appreciation is also due to the different agencies of the United Nations system and to the other multilateral organizations which contributed to the richness of the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

The draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.88 is co-sponsored by all of the least developed countries. Let me note that due to time constraints, not all of them have been able to formally sign up, but, as I said, this draft enjoys the support of all of the least developed countries. I will read out the names of the countries that have signed the document: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sao Tome and Principe, United Republic of Tanzania, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and my own country, Bangladesh.

We are happy that the countries of the European Union — Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom — are co-sponsoring the draft resolution.

On behalf of the co-sponsors and on my own behalf, having acted as the coordinator of least developed countries at all three Conferences in various capacities, I submit, for adoption by consensus by the Assembly, the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.88.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.88.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.88, entitled "Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.88?

Draft resolution A/55/L.88 was adopted (resolution 55/279).

Mr. De Loecker (Belgium) *(spoke in French)*: At the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001, the European Union welcomed the endorsement by the General Assembly of this Programme of Action, which is very complete and of fundamental importance. Throughout this process, our goal has been to contribute to the creation of a solid Programme of Action for the next decade by focusing on poverty eradication in the least developed countries on the basis of partnership and mutual commitment. This is the bet we are placing.

The European Union would like to thank all of its partners and the major actors that have contributed to the success of the Conference. Moreover, we would like to underscore that the endorsement of this Programme of Action is merely the beginning. The real results will be shown through its implementation and follow-up over the next decade.

In this respect, the European Union continues to be willing to work in close cooperation with its partners so as to ensure that this Programme of Action will contribute effectively to the improvement of the living conditions of the populations of the least developed countries, which are among the poorest in the world. We will involve ourselves actively in the debate on the follow-up mechanisms at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 102?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10 *(continued)*

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Report of the Secretary-General on prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985 and Corr.1)

Ms. Wensley (Australia): Mr. President, I wish to thank you very much for scheduling this plenary debate, and I am glad you have been able to rejoin us this afternoon. It seems to me that not only have they displaced you from your office, Sir, while they are renovating, but they have also displaced you from your customary place in the General Assembly Hall. We are all having to make some adjustments to our new physical surroundings.

The Australian Government welcomed the recent report by the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict, which was presented to us this morning by the Deputy Secretary-General. We see this report as serving two important purposes. First, and most obviously, it raises important issues on how the United Nations addresses conflict, and it points our way ahead for preventing future conflict. But we also see it as a useful tool that can help us all in the ongoing process of improving the capability and effectiveness of the United Nations. From this particular plenary debate, we hope that we will see ways found to move its recommendations forward.

Australia recognizes that preventive action must address the multiple causes and factors that generate or contribute to conflict. The recent General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS underlined for all of us the changing concept of international security to encompass a wide range of threats to humanity, including environmental and health problems and poverty. Effective analysis and identification, however, of the nature of problems, of the nature of conflict, of the threats to security and of their root causes is not much good to us unless these are matched by appropriate, preventive and remedial action. An integrated approach to conflict prevention must obviously be multifaceted, drawing on the broad expertise of the political, security, development, humanitarian and human rights agencies of the United Nations system, and also including the Bretton Woods institutions and beyond. We welcomed in particular the importance placed on human rights aspects of conflict prevention, as highlighted in recommendations 16 and 17 of the Secretary-General's report.

It is also important that the United Nations continue to enhance its capability to react quickly in response to emerging crises. In this regard, the Secretariat has a key role to play, and there is a real need to strengthen its early warning capacity. The Security Council also needs to be less reactive and more proactive in its approach to conflict prevention. Security Council missions have been used to good effect in recent years, as we found, for example, in East Timor. In our view, much more could be done with this mechanism. This morning I was interested to hear Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani suggest that there would be benefit in analysing why a particular Security Council mission failed. We think that that sort of analysis should be applied also to where Security Council missions succeeded. As the Deputy Secretary-General said to us this morning, where prevention works, it is less visible. We do tend to focus on the negative and on the failures. But there are also successes, and if we are going to do that sort of analysis, let us look at both: what has worked, why did it work, what did it achieve and, again, where were the things that went wrong? From that we should be able to draw some very valuable experience.

We would also agree with a lot of other speakers in this debate today that the roles of the Security

Council and of the General Assembly are complementary in conflict prevention and need to be used to full effect. I am very pleased to see a number of current members of the Security Council joining us and participating in and listening to this debate. That is the sort of practical interaction that will actually help us move from talking about these things to making them happen.

The Secretary-General has drawn an important distinction between regular developmental assistance and humanitarian assistance programmes, and those implemented as a preventive or peace-building response to problems that could lead to an outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict. While it is essential to address emergencies as they occur, this cannot be at the expense of long-term development programmes which build the conditions for sustainable peace. As the major development agency of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme has a particularly important role to play in addressing the development aspects of conflict prevention. There are substantial benefits to be gained by bringing together those agencies that hold the skills and the experience to bring about peace and development. The role of non-governmental organizations, addressed by the report in recommendation 27, is obviously also significant.

Flexible, low-maintenance mechanisms to achieve greater coordination and cooperation between those engaged in conflict prevention should be explored, as recommended by the Brahimi report on United Nations peace operations. We see some very important linkages between this latest report of the Secretary-General and our work to implement and move forward the Brahimi report.

In supporting a comprehensive, integrated approach by the international system to conflict prevention, my Government is conscious of the principal responsibility of national Governments to prevent differences from deteriorating into conflicts. In this regard, we would highlight the importance of good-governance programmes in assisting nations in addressing these issues, and I would note the high and increasing priority that Australia gives to such programmes.

We were very pleased to see the emphasis in this report on regional activities. Australia supports very strongly effective coordination between regional organizations and the United Nations. Regional organizations and arrangements have an important role to play in supporting sovereign States and broader international action. Their close proximity and their awareness of local issues always give them added insight into conflicts, and can provide a good local forum for efforts to decrease tension and to broker solutions.

Recommendation 9 in the Secretary-General's report calls for enhanced regional prevention strategies. In our region this is not just a matter of words; we are already working on these things. We have embraced that approach in our region. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum is the principal multilateral forum for security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region, and it continues to be an important element in the security architecture of the region as a whole. ASEAN Regional Forum members have agreed on a three-stage evolution for the ASEAN Regional Forum, from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy and, in the longer-term, to conflict resolution. The Forum is beginning a transition from a confidence-building to a preventive diplomacy phase.

Increasingly, as we all know, many conflicts are influenced or affected by regional issues. A number of factors that can fuel conflict — such as small arms flows, drug-trafficking or illegal exploitation of natural resources — have cross-border linkages that would benefit from being addressed through regional measures and arrangements.

I would like to highlight a few specific situations in the South Pacific subregion: Bougainville and Solomon Islands. In Bougainville, Australia remains strongly committed to the role of the Peace Monitoring Group. We welcome the progress achieved through the United Nations/Peace Monitoring Group facilitation by Papua New Guinea and Bougainville officials towards reaching a comprehensive political settlement. In Solomon Islands Australia leads an international peace monitoring team to promote confidence in the peace process and supervise the collection of weapons.

Finally, in terms of giving the Assembly some practical examples of the way in which preventive diplomacy can be pursued in a regional context, our experience in East Timor provides a good example of how the United Nations acted effectively to help resolve an extremely serious situation. Here I want to take the opportunity to emphasize that there is a need for continuing international engagement in post-

independence East Timor to build on the achievements made so far, to continue to develop not just the physical infrastructure, but also the political institutions and civil society mechanisms needed for future stability and development. As the Secretary-General noted in his report, sustainable development is predicated on peace and stability. It is important that we continue to provide all necessary support to the people of East Timor to assist them in their endeavours to protect the investments made by the United Nations and the international community so far.

As we are all too painfully aware, the proliferation of small arms sustains and exacerbates armed conflicts. We agree with the Secretary-General that measures to prevent the misuse and illicit transfer of small arms and to address the root causes of the demands for small arms would greatly contribute to the prevention of conflict.

There are some other comments in my statement, which is being circulated, about some of the work that we have been doing on small arms, but I will leave representatives to read these comments themselves. I want to go on to talk about another subject that is vitally important in the context of this discussion: gender.

Gender is an important element of the effective promotion of peace, as has been acknowledged particularly in recommendation 24 of the report. There is a need for effective institutional arrangements to guarantee the protection of women affected by armed conflict. In addition, and just as importantly, the full participation of women in peace processes is an essential part of the maintenance and the promotion of international peace. The Security Council recognized this in resolution 1325 (2000), when it expressed its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peace operations.

I was present at a discussion among a group of Ambassadors earlier this week where some of them said they did not even know what the word gender meant. When we have this sort of discussion then we really do need to be focusing on these issues, looking at what decisions are made and saying, "how do we put them into effect?"

It was very important that in that Security Council debate and in that resolution — as well as highlighting the need to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence — the Council recognized that women should not always be seen as vulnerable, helpless victims, but as strong and capable persons who can be valuable and active contributors to peace processes. I certainly hope that, as we work on following up on this report, we will focus on putting substance into this area of the report's recommendations. We most certainly join the Secretary-General in encouraging the Council and the Assembly to give greater attention to gender perspectives in their conflict prevention and peace-building efforts.

In conclusion, we would stress that, as we follow up on this report and seek to implement its recommendations, it is particularly important that we address the issue of conflict prevention in an integrated way, drawing together all relevant organs of the United Nations and involving other necessary actors. Unless together we make a determined effort to do this, we will simply never achieve the transformation that the Secretary-General has urged: to change our perception of a just international order from a very simple vision of the absence of war and conflict to a vision of sustainable peace and development for all.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): At the outset, my delegation would like to express its sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on prevention of armed conflict. We hope that this debate will contribute to the elaboration of the strategy of the international community in this field. Prevention of armed conflict lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations to maintain international peace and security. My delegation commends the report of the Secretary-General and his tireless personal efforts to enhance the role of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflicts.

The document under consideration today reviews the progress achieved by the United Nations in developing its conflict prevention strategy and contains numerous concrete recommendations to further mobilize the activity of the United Nations system in this field. In drafting this report, the Secretary-General took into consideration the different views of Member States and the members of the Security Council on the issue. The report has a comprehensive approach and emphasizes the need for strengthening cooperation between the wide range of actors in elaborating effective preventive strategies and building a mutually

reinforcing partnership between the United Nations system, regional organizations and civil society.

My delegation concurs with the view that the prevention of armed conflicts could be comparatively economical and cost-effective, saving lives and the environment for development. Regrettably, however, we must recognize that the prevention of armed conflict remains one of the lesser aspects of the United Nations work. That means that the international community should respond adequately to this modern-day challenge by demonstrating the political will of Member States and their strong commitment to the United Nations Charter.

The Secretary-General has also indicated that fundamental responsibility for the prevention of armed conflict rests with national Governments. My delegation agrees that conflict prevention is a collective obligation of Member States; it also believes that here the United Nations plays the key role and that the United Nations and the Security Council have a clear responsibility in the maintenance of peace and stability.

Therefore, the Security Council needs the full cooperation of all the other principal bodies of the United Nations. Every effort should be made to expand the area of interaction of those United Nations organs and to promote the role of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General, who, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, can bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which might threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

When the members of the Security Council last month held a discussion focused on the prevention of armed conflict, the principles and recommendations set out by the Secretary-General received a positive response. We hope that the Security Council will take an early decision on the recommendations addressed to that main United Nations body.

My delegation fully endorses the recommendation that the Security Council should consider the establishment of innovative mechanisms to enable it to discharge its responsibilities more effectively. We think that a subsidiary body of the Council for considering preventive measures in specific situations would be an important component of the Security Council's activities on this issue. We also support the Secretary-General's intention to provide the Council with periodic regional or subregional reports on threats to international peace and security. That will enable the Security Council to formulate effective responses.

Kazakhstan welcomes the report's recommendation on the development of regional strategies that would involve regional actors with a view to promoting long-term conflict prevention. That recommendation is particularly important for my country and the other countries of Central Asia, which face the danger of a further spread of the conflict in Afghanistan. That conflict contributes to tension in the region and represents a real threat to the stability and security of Central Asia and of the international community as a whole. The recent incursions by Islamic militants confirm the need for a comprehensive approach to the Afghan crisis.

The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Nursultan Nazarbaev, addressing the Millennium Summit in September 2000, called for a special meeting of the Security Council to consider the situation in Afghanistan and Central Asia in order to take practical steps to stabilize the situation in that region.

We believe that a special meeting should launch the process of the adoption by the international community of comprehensive political, economic and humanitarian measures to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and bring long-awaited peace and stability to the suffering Afghan people. Today's realities require that the international community adopt new approaches to assessing the current political, military and geopolitical situation in the region of Central and South Asia and that it develop a qualitatively new concept for an Afghan settlement containing mechanisms for international intervention and for mobilizing financial and material resources.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that the active involvement of regional security systems in processes for the maintenance of international peace and security will enhance the peacemaking potential of the United Nations. Kazakhstan has been consistently promoting its initiative on the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia. We are grateful to all States participating in that process for their support of our initiative and for their genuine willingness to work together to build an Asian security system. This November, my country will host a summit

of countries members of the Conference. We are confident that that gathering will be an important event in the light of its contribution to the efforts of the international community to ensure global and regional security.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflicts (A/55/985). At the same time my delegation also wishes to commend the Secretary-General for preparing an excellent report to guide our debate here today.

More than 50 years ago, the United Nations was formed based on the fundamental objective of saving humanity from the scourge of war and violent conflict. However, the world today is still far from being a peaceful, just and secure place. Simmering disputes, violent conflicts, ethnic strife, religious intolerance, xenophobia and racism are some of the dangerous characteristics of contemporary human society. The process of globalization has often placed profound strains on States and their constituent parts, resulting in an escalation of existing tensions within them. Nowhere are those conditions more truly present than in the continent of Africa.

South Africa believes that there exists an inextricable link among peace, democracy and development. Therefore, in our view, the prevention of conflict within States requires that we work towards the establishment of solid institutions of democratic governance which protect the rule of law and promote fundamental human rights, including the right to development. The responsibility for achieving those goals rests primarily with States and their national Governments. In Africa, we are beginning to make great strides in our efforts to achieve peace, democracy and development. Those efforts are facilitated by the growing realization among African leaders that the continent's destiny can no longer rely on the good will of others and that development cannot take place without peace.

Just this week, the Assembly of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of the African Unity adopted a landmark initiative in which African leaders committed themselves to take joint responsibility to strengthen continental mechanisms for conflict prevention; to promote and protect democracy and human rights; to promote the rule of law; to restore and maintain macroeconomic stability; and to promote the role of women in African societies. However, it goes without saying that the success of our efforts also depends on an enabling international environment, particularly in the spheres of international trade and the eradication of the debt burden.

Against that backdrop, my delegation wishes to express the following views with respect to the role of the General Assembly in the prevention of armed conflict.

First, in my delegation's view, the General Assembly, as the only universal forum, has an important role to play in the prevention of armed conflict, particularly in creating and maintaining global values and norms, and in nurturing greater awareness. The present report could serve as an impetus for future discussion in the Assembly aimed at consolidating such global norms and values.

Secondly, at a practical level, the General Assembly can play a positive role in providing the necessary political and financial support for efforts aimed at strengthening regional capacities to deal with conflict prevention and resolution. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General to facilitate collaboration between the United Nations system and regional organizations in the areas of prevention and peace-building. However, we believe more can be done in this domain by ensuring that cooperation between the United Nations regional actors becomes more focused on key areas, such as analysis, information-sharing and the building of early warning capacities in regional organizations.

Thirdly, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, peace-building, whether before or after conflicts, forms an integral part of a broader strategy of conflict prevention. The complexity of peace-building tasks and the vastness of the resources required necessitate the engagement of a multiplicity of international actors, including civil society and the private sector. The response to these challenges requires unity of effort and long-term engagement. In our view, the General Assembly is eminently placed to meet these challenges and to bring the range of actors together to ensure the unity of effort of the international community.

The post-cold war world has witnessed a firm acknowledgement of the link between peace and development. Although poverty and underdevelopment

are not in themselves the primary root causes of conflict, their existence in combination with other factors certainly provides fertile ground for violent conflicts. The development dimension of conflicts provides an ideal opportunity for the Economic and Social Council to play a more active role in supporting efforts aimed at the prevention of conflicts. In collaboration with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council is well placed to assist in the development of long-term strategies that address the root causes of conflict. We therefore look forward to a debate in the Economic and Social Council to consider its role on this very complex matter.

Finally, with respect to the role of the Secretary-General in the prevention of armed conflicts, my delegation wishes to commend the tireless efforts of Secretary-General Annan to bring greater coherence to the activities of the United Nations system in addressing conflicts, as was demonstrated by the recent inter-agency missions to West Africa. Such coherence is the first major step in nurturing a culture of prevention. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue to sharpen the Organization's tools of analysis and early warning.

In conclusion, the prevention of armed conflict remains a historical imperative rooted in the Charter of the United Nations. While much can be done, and has been done, to improve the Organization's capacities to meet its responsibilities in early warning and analysis, the success of prevention ultimately depends on the political will of the broader international community to act consistently and decisively to remove threats to international peace and security. This will require from Member States a reconfiguration of the notion of national interest, taking into account a changing conceptualization of security that includes an emphasis on the security of human beings.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): Mr. President, we commend you for convening this meeting on a matter of tremendous importance to my country and, indeed, to our continent of Africa. We also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for introducing the report on the prevention of armed conflict.

Sierra Leone commends the Secretary-General for his brilliant and comprehensive report. The report has given us constructive and thought-provoking ideas for further reflection. However, I must confess that speaking now, after having listened to the speakers before me, I was left with the option of not contributing at all to this debate, because most of what I wanted to say has been covered by other delegations, and I risk repeating what they have already said. If I fall victim to this possibility, I offer an unqualified apology.

Any analysis of any conflict must include an examination of the root causes of the conflict. This is where an assessment of the political, social and economic variables must be given top priority. In this regard, we agree with the Secretary-General's linkage of conflict prevention and sustainable, equitable development as mutually reinforcing activities. We therefore support all the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in this report and the attendant principles enunciated therein. We will comment on some aspects of the report.

We agree with the Secretary-General that all organs of the United Nations are key actors in conflict prevention. Let me refer to two of the main organs, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice. We agree with the Secretary-General that the Security Council, as the organ with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has a key role to play in the prevention of armed conflict. Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter provides the basis for preventive action by the Security Council, as stated in the report. However, in most, if not all, cases, the Security Council gets involved only when the armed conflict has already occurred. In this regard, we agree with and support the measures proposed by the Secretary-General in recommendation 3 of his report, especially the early warning measure.

We believe that when there exists in a country the obstacle of inequality in political, economic and social opportunities, it is likely to lead to armed conflict to resolve the imbalance. People rebel because they perceive an imbalance between their expectations and capabilities. For example, such imbalances may take the form of one tribe or one religion dominating other tribes or other religions. It may also occur when the political class lives a life of ostentatious opulence at the expense of the masses and neglects the people's expectations and aspirations. This situation existed in my country, Sierra Leone, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In fact, some academics have postulated that the situation I have just described caused the armed conflict in my country.

We also agree with the report that the International Court of Justice is an indispensable element of the system for the peaceful settlement of disputes. However, the Court contributes to the resolution of disputes between States and occasionally, between international organizations. In other words, the International Court of Justice litigates on disputes of an international character. The question that arises, then, is "What about disputes of a non-international character, such as rebellions by armed groups within a State?"

We believe that the establishment of ad hoc international tribunals and special courts for countries emerging from conflicts is an effective means of preventing armed conflicts. We cannot deny that those who take up arms within a State invariably commit heinous atrocities against innocent civilians, including women, children and the old. The establishment of ad hoc tribunals and special courts — and let me mention here the establishment of the International Criminal Court, which will come into operation when 60 States have ratified its Statute — will act, in our view, as a deterrent to those in future who propose to engage in armed conflicts. There is therefore a link between international criminal courts and the prevention of armed conflict.

We support the recommendation contained in paragraph 60 of the report on the establishment of a United Nations office in West Africa. We commend the Secretary-General for this recommendation. We look forward to the establishment of this office after careful consideration of all aspects of its role and mandate, in order to avoid duplicating the functions of other bodies in the region. We also strongly support recommendation 9 of the report; the spirit and intent of this recommendation are in line with the thinking in our part of the world.

We support the holding of the Conference now taking place on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is legally and morally imperative that we take immediate action to control the manufacture, transfer and stockpiling of small arms and light weapons, which account for the bulk of the casualties and atrocities in conflicts. The uncontrollable proliferation of these weapons helps to propel armed conflicts. There should be greater transparency on the part of Member States on the manufacture and sale of small arms and light weapons. In this regard, we enthusiastically support the Secretary-General's recommendations 14 and 15 in the report.

One link in the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is the role that transnational organized criminals play in this evil trade. We call upon all States to sign as a matter of urgency the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime. My country, Sierra Leone, will soon sign that Convention. However, we affirm the legitimate right of States to acquire arms for their legitimate use, their right to individual and collective defence and their duty to protect their citizens. We also support the right of individuals to carry arms in support of their fundamental and constitutional rights.

In conclusion, we call on all developed countries to hearken to the clarion call of the Secretary-General to the donor community to increase the flow of development assistance to developing countries. Over the past few years, the flow of development assistance has slowed down. The downward trend must be changed. In this regard, we commend the role of the United Nations specialized agencies, civil society and non-governmental organizations in filling the gaps left by the reduction of development assistance.

Mr. Lavalle-Valdés (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): The principle of the superiority of prevention over cure is not only generally valid, but also the subject of well-known proverbs. Accordingly, anyone who merely enunciates the principles would appear to show scant originality of thought. Praise is due, however, to anyone who, in addition to enunciating the principles, asks himself how they can best be put to use in a given field. We feel in particular that, in our efforts to put an end to armed conflicts, it is difficult to exaggerate the usefulness of sustained and profound reflection on the best ways of giving priority to those methods to be used before such conflicts occur.

One excellent basis for such reflection is provided by the thoughtful report that the Secretary-General has provided us in document A/55/985. Among the many qualities of this report, of particular note is the effort manifestly put into drafting it to address its subject imaginatively and from every conceivable angle. We wish to make some comments on this report, especially with regard to its relation to the distinction between armed conflicts between States and intra-State conflicts, which, as we all know, are the most common nowadays.

In this respect, we feel that, just as there are important differences between the methods of resolving one or another type of armed conflict after it has broken out, there are necessarily considerable differences between methods of prevention, the applicability of which will depend on the type of conflict involved. It should also be noted that, in many cases, the prevention of an evil implies the prior detection of its symptoms. Accordingly, in dealing with potential armed conflicts, we must bear in mind that, just as the symptoms of inter-State armed conflict differ considerably from those of intra-State armed conflict, there is considerable difference, depending on the type of armed conflict in question, between the methods to be applied in the detection of such symptoms.

I would add that what I have just noted regarding symptoms of armed conflicts also applies to their causes. It should also be observed that distinguishing between the two types of armed conflict significantly affects the conditions of application laid down in the Charter. Keeping this distinction in mind, even a superficial reading of Chapters VI and VII and of paragraph 7 of Article 2 of the Charter is sufficient to establish that fact. Nonetheless, the report before us, which justifiably covers both types of armed conflict, does not say how the distinction between them affects the various aspects of its subject.

We feel that this characteristic of the report is, in large measure, a reflection of its two most direct antecedents: the presidential statements of the Security Council of 30 November 1999 and 20 July 2000, which fail to distinguish between the two types of armed conflict. This may reflect the fact that, although the Security Council is doubtless aware of the danger posed to international peace by armed intra-State conflicts, the powers explicitly conferred by the Charter relate almost exclusively to conflicts between States. The presidential statements to which I have referred might thus be a sort of distortion peculiar to the profession.

We recognize that many of the observations and recommendations contained in the report apply to the prevention of both types of conflict equally, whereas, in other instances, it is obvious that they apply solely to the prevention of conflicts between States. However, even where an observation or recommendation applies equally to both possibilities, it would have been interesting to highlight the differences between the conditions of application corresponding to the different types of conflict in question.

This observation particularly concerns recommendations 3, 9 and 12 in the report. With specific reference to recommendation 3, we not only consider that there is merit in the warnings voiced on 21 June in the Security Council by the representatives of Costa Rica and Egypt concerning the risks inherent in the submission to that body of reports on the prevention of potential armed conflicts in specific cases, but we also believe that, when such reports address the prevention of potential intra-State conflicts, they become especially dangerous.

Turning now to other orders of ideas, we wish, with regard to the first of the objectives mentioned in paragraph 5 and to recommendation 1, to point to the absence in paragraph 27 of any reference to three important initiatives of the General Assembly concerning the modalities of the settlement of disputes between States identified in Article 33 of the Charter. One of those initiatives is the draft articles on arbitral procedure, which were the subject of General Assembly resolution 1262 (XIII), adopted in 1958. Although this is admittedly an old text and elicited some controversy in its day, we feel that States wishing to submit a dispute to arbitration would act unwisely if they failed to turn to these draft articles in drawing up a corresponding agreement. Also worth mentioning is the Declaration on Fact-Finding annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/59, as is resolution 50/50, adopted as a result of a Guatemalan initiative, concerning modalities for conciliation, another method of settling disputes referred to in Article 33 of the Charter.

We feel, moreover, that in section III of the report, greater prominence might have been given to the Declaration on the Prevention and Removal of Disputes and Situations Which May Threaten International Peace and Security and the Role of the United Nations in this Field, annexed to General Assembly resolution 43/51, to which the Under-Secretary-General referred in her statement this morning, but which is mentioned in paragraph 28 of the report only with respect to the role of the General Assembly. This Declaration, however, contains ideas that could prove very useful with regard to the contribution that could be made to the prevention of armed conflict, not only by the General Assembly but by the other principal organs of the United Nations.

With regard to the role of the Secretary-General in particular, we wish to recall the important provisions embodied in paragraphs 20 to 24 of the Declaration.

We believe that it would also have been useful to include, in chapter III of the report, a reference to the Manila Declaration on the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes, which is annexed to General Assembly resolution 37/10, together with commentary on its possible usefulness.

We would have liked section A of chapter V of the report to include a reference to the Declaration on the Enhancement of Cooperation between the United Nations and Regional Arrangements or Agencies in the Maintenance of International Peace and Security, annexed to resolution 49/57.

In conclusion, I should like to note that, with regard to recommendations 5 and 6 of the report, the fact that a State has refrained from making a declaration under Article 38, paragraph 2, of the Statute of the International Court of Justice does not necessarily imply that that State is reluctant to accept the competency of the Court in adjudicating a particular dispute with any other State.

Mr. Li Hyong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I should like at the outset to express my thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on the prevention of armed conflict, contained in document A/55/985. In his report, the Secretary-General has defined the prevention of armed conflict as the major United Nations activity for the maintenance of international peace and security in the new century, and proposed detailed and comprehensive recommendations aimed at enhancing the prevention capacity of the United Nations.

After the end of the cold war, we had high expectations for global peace. But, on the contrary, the number of armed conflicts is continuing to increase at a far greater rate than during the cold war era, resulting in a series of tragedies that have claimed thousands of innocent lives. This constitutes a challenge to the common desire of humankind to make the new century peaceful and prosperous.

It is quite natural, therefore, for the United Nations to approach the issue of maintaining international peace and security from a new angle and to take further practical and effective steps through full consultation among Member States. In this regard, my delegation is of the view that the prevention of armed conflict is the most effective and practical way to maintain international peace and security, and we would like to highlight several points.

First, in preventing armed conflict it is important, inter alia, to establish sound international relations based on the principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in others' internal affairs. The principles of respect for sovereignty and non-interference in others' internal affairs constitute a cornerstone for peaceful and stable international relations. Encroachment upon sovereignty — the worst cause of conflict — should never be tolerated. This notwithstanding, open violations of sovereignty persist, in the form of military attack, economic blockade and political pressure against countries that are out of favour. At the same time, rivalries among nations and different political and ethnic groups are instigated so as to create excuses for eventual intervention. We believe that these have been a major cause of many outbreaks of armed conflict in recent years.

High-handedness and arbitrariness, which have been rampant recently, are hampering the development of equal and just international relations and threatening international peace and security. The establishment of international relations based on respect for sovereignty and non-interference is therefore the first and foremost task for the fundamental resolution of a conflict issue.

Secondly, an international environment favourable to the sustainable development of developing countries should be created. The ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries and worsening poverty constitute a source of social instability and, furthermore, pose a potential threat to peace and security. Accordingly, every possible effort should be made to increase official development assistance for the developing countries, to enhance the capacity of the United Nations for economic cooperation and to establish new and just international economic relations favourable to the sustainable development of all countries.

Thirdly, the peaceful resolution of disputes by the parties concerned, through negotiation, should be considered a basic principle. Whether or not a dispute between States or within a State is resolved peacefully depends entirely on the will of the parties concerned. Forceful actions such as imposing sanctions or, worse still, using armed force on the pretext of preventing

armed conflict, will result only in aggravating the dispute. Even if the dispute is resolved by force, such a resolution cannot be real and durable. It is therefore important for due attention to be paid to identifying potential dispute areas and the root causes of disputes in advance and to creating a favourable atmosphere for the parties to resolve the dispute peacefully and take full responsibility themselves.

Fourthly, it is necessary to improve the role of the United Nations in preventing armed conflict. In this regard, it is important to enhance the role of the General Assembly and to ensure impartiality in the conflict prevention activities of the Security Council. Activities such as preventive diplomacy in the name of the United Nations should be undertaken on the basis of the prior consent of relevant Governments or parties.

Our delegation believes that these ideas will be helpful to the United Nations in its efforts to prevent armed conflict in the new century.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict. We believe that, when fully implemented, the recommendations of this sound and comprehensive study will contribute significantly to strengthening the United Nations capacity in maintaining international peace and security, which, as stated explicitly in the Charter, is the fundamental goal of this Organization. With regard to this basic purpose, the report itself and the opinions presented during our debate underline that the key issue is prevention. It is an undeniable fact that the cost of preventive action is much lower than the cost of the damage caused by conflicts. It is even lower than the cost that the international community has to pay as a consequence of humanitarian intervention and for post-war and post-conflict reconstruction.

Nevertheless, we have witnessed many wars, armed conflicts and acts of genocide that did not erupt suddenly. Most of them have evolved slowly from sources of hatred deeply ingrained in relations between States and, to a large extent, from different kinds of inequality among the particular ethnic groups and minorities that make up a specific nation.

We could have reduced suffering and saved lives, but we have not risen to the challenge. The Secretary-General draws our attention to Article 1 of the Charter, which clearly states that Member States have committed themselves "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". The report as a whole is a clear call for fulfilment of that obligation, which all United Nations Members accepted by signing the Charter. In this regard, Poland, for its part, declares its readiness to fully cooperate with the Secretary-General in implementation of the recommendations contained in his report and encourages all other States to become engaged in the efforts taken by the Organization to implement this comprehensive concept of peace and security.

We would like to single out some important aspects of the report. First, since this Organization has a particularly important role in the area of the prevention of conflicts, there is an urgent need for improving cooperation within the United Nations system. We look forward to the implementation of the recommendations aimed at streamlining the preventive activities of the main United Nations organs: the Security Council and the General Assembly. Of great importance is the effective implementation of Security Council resolutions, in particular with regard to the complete observance of arms embargoes imposed on the parties in a conflict. There should be no turning a blind eye to any State, organization or interest group that is not complying with the provisions of Security Council resolutions.

In this context, I should like to recall two events that are taking place at the same time as our debate. The Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is examining new proposals which will improve the performance of the United Nations in the area of peacekeeping and make operations more efficient and effective; and this week the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects began. The problem of small arms has become one of the greatest challenges to the security of mankind and requires the adoption of international rules incorporating suitable preventive measures.

Secondly, the international community should pay more attention to cooperation in the prevention of armed conflict between the United Nations and regional organizations. In this regard, far-reaching coordination of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo on the one hand, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the other, to

implement Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) has yielded notable results on the ground, as confirmed by the Security Council mission to Kosovo. Poland supports any measures aimed at improving and strengthening cooperation among the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations. This cooperation should be a useful tool for preventing and removing conflicts and threats to international security. Cooperation between the United Nations and NATO and the OSCE, as well as the European Union (EU), are of the greatest importance to us. We hope that cooperation will bring even better results in resolving such conflicts as those in the Caucasian region or in Moldova.

Cooperation between the United Nations and NATO and the OSCE, as well as the EU, could be a source of many lessons for such cooperation in other regions, particularly in Africa, where most of the current conflicts are taking place. Poland commends the steps taken by the African leaders aimed at the year-long transition of the Organization of African Unity to the African Union, envisioned as a far stronger and closer-knit body. The transition will be a challenge for African leaders in their work towards the elimination of the poverty and health crises that are the root causes of a great many conflicts.

Thirdly, the international community should do its utmost to decrease the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Sometimes society is artificially divided into different ethnic groups, which directly results in differences in access to education, health care and food aid. Such conditions may lead instantly to an outbreak of hostilities. In this respect, we commend the Secretary-General for his broad approach to conflict prevention, as seen in the report. We understand the reason why a high-level segment of the annual substantive session of the Economic and Social Council should be devoted to the question of addressing the root causes of conflict and the role of development in promoting long-term conflict prevention.

Poland is profoundly convinced that we cannot separate all of these problems. In this context, I would like to underline recommendation 12 of the report, in which the Secretary-General encourages the "more active use of preventive deployments before the onset of conflict". We believe that this assumption should be the cornerstone of United Nations peacekeeping activity in the future.

We would also like to underline another aspect of the preventive strategy mentioned by the Secretary-General. As I pointed out at the beginning of my statement, human rights abuses have been the root causes of many conflicts. We will be able to launch effective preventive action in the future only if we are serious about continuously adapting the United Nations human rights machinery in this area.

We agree that, as the Secretary-General has stressed in his report, such machinery should include the promotion of every human right, including social rights. This leads us to an equally important factor of prevention strategy: development strategy. Social tensions and social frustration provoke conflict and instability. We should therefore integrate our social and economic programmes aimed at the reduction of poverty and deprivation with the general imperative of a new culture of prevention.

The report of the Secretary-General contains a coherent set of recommendations that clearly show us what should be done to translate our political commitments into action in an effective way. What is needed is the strong will of the international community to put them into effect.

Ms. Hafseld (Norway): I have just learned that our Ambassador has been detained in an important meeting, so I will speak on his behalf.

Norway welcomes the Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention. The observation that most of the factors that stopped the United Nations from intervening to prevent genocide in Rwanda remain present today is something that we find deeply disturbing. In itself, it provides a clear rationale for why conflict prevention must continue to be high on the United Nations agenda.

Norway shares the Secretary-General's vision that we need to move the United Nations system from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. Indeed, the need to provide the United Nations system with a broad and unified approach to peace, security and development is a core premise for Norway's work during our membership in the Security Council and for our active involvement in the United Nations system at large. This is also an important premise in the Brahimi report, and we appeal to Member States to provide broad support for the implementation of its recommendations.

Norway agrees that effective conflict prevention requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both short-term and long-term political, diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights, developmental, institutional and other measures taken by the international community in cooperation with national and regional actors. A full account of our views on each of these measures is beyond the scope of this statement. We welcome the open approach taken by the Secretary-General in inviting Member States to participate in developing a road map to implement the specific recommendations in the report. In the following comments I will attempt to do this by providing our views on the principal issues in the report.

First, we agree that conflict prevention must be based on national ownership. An understanding of the local and underlying causes of each conflict is a fundamental premise for successful prevention. The emphasis of the international community should be on assistance, particularly for local capacity-building. The United Nations funds and programmes, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have broad representation at the country level. These are the day-to-day interlocutors that have a wide network of contacts with national Governments, civil society and donor agencies. They are also the prime United Nations actors for local capacity-building in areas such as governance.

As such, the question of local ownership is linked to another important premise in the Secretary-General's report: that successful preventive strategies are dependent on the cooperation of many United Nations actors. As pointed out in the report, mechanisms such as the Common Country Assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Resident Coordinator system have been developed to coordinate United Nations efforts at the country level. We agree that these mechanisms offer a significant opportunity to identify and implement conflict-prevention strategies at the country level. Concurrently, the Department of Political Affairs is the United Nations focal point for conflict prevention. A considerable part of the Department's prevention work is done in support of Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General, as well as field-based missions and offices, such as the United Nations Peace-Building Support Offices.

We have for years spoken of the interrelationship between peace and development, but we have not permitted this interrelationship to be fully operationalized within the United Nations system. Greater priority should be given to achieving a coherent and integrated approach to conflict prevention. United Nations efforts have to form a consistent whole.

Norway envisages a stronger focus by the Security Council on the need for a more integrated approach to peace, as well as a strengthened coordination between the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Norway also believes necessary steps to achieve consistency include a strengthening of the general political branch of the United Nations as well as closer cooperation between the United Nations development system and the political apparatus of the United Nations, primarily at the country level. The United Nations needs to build capacity for more sophisticated analysis, if its role in preventive action is to be enhanced. The United Nations development system must tailor its activities to the root causes of potential conflict. Targeted development aid is likely to be an effective preventive measure. Norway looks to UNDP to take the lead within the United Nations development system in order to advance the cause of conflict prevention.

The United Nations presence at the country level is important for the early prevention of conflict. It is also important in ensuring that preventive strategies are based on local initiatives and participation. In our view, there is a need to clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of communication for the United Nations system's work at the country level, in order to secure the best use of existing resources for conflict prevention.

Cooperation to prevent conflict stretches beyond the United Nations system and national Governments. Regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) — or now the African Union — and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are developing their capacity for conflict prevention. These are measures that should be actively supported by the international community. Norway has provided support to the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. Within the broad mandate

of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the United Nations should seek to strengthen its cooperation with regional organizations on conflict prevention. A close cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly at the country level, should also be encouraged.

A wide range of cooperative measures are at hand for the United Nations system, such as preventive diplomacy, mediation and sanctions, as well as support for democratic principles, security sector reform and human rights. These are, and should be, the main components of preventive strategies.

However, these strategies are effective only when conflicts are driven by grievances that can be addressed by such measures, and where there exists a commitment to peaceful solutions to conflict in the affected conflict areas. We must not be blind to the fact that the desire for personal economic gain and greed drive many conflicts that constitute a threat to international peace and security. Today, widespread poverty and armed conflict go hand in hand in countries that are rich in resources.

How can peace be secured among belligerents that actively seek to undermine the efforts to prevent armed conflict? Reducing the profits of war is an important preventive measure. The Security Council should continue its work to develop more effective measures targeted at the illegal exploitation of natural resources and related factors that drives armed conflict. Experience so far shows us that such measures serve to strengthen, rather than weaken, national sovereignty.

The first United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects opened here in New York on July 9. It is of prime importance for this Conference to agree on a programme of action to curb the illicit trade in small arms. Practical disarmament measures such as "weapons for development" and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement are important tools for preventing conflict. We appeal to donor countries to provide the necessary funding for such projects. Norway has supported a wide range of practical disarmament measures and contributed to the establishment of the UNDP Trust Fund on Small Arms. In our view, the United Nations should increase its support for regional measures to curb the illicit trade in small arms.

We agree that preventive action should be initiated at the earliest possible stage of a conflict cycle in order to be effective. This is a strong argument for fully utilizing the United Nations presence at the country level. Furthermore, timing is a key word in operational conflict prevention. Financial resources must be readily available in order to enable the United Nations to act swiftly. Norway has supported the Trust Fund for Preventive Action, and we would like to use this opportunity to appeal to other donor countries to provide financial resources to that Fund.

Indeed, it is our responsibility as Member States to provide the necessary resources for conflict prevention. The interlinkages between conflict prevention and sustainable development are well argued in the report. Structural conflict prevention must address the root causes of conflict, such as poverty. In our view, a reversal of the negative trend in international official development assistance would more clearly signal the commitment of the international community to conflict prevention.

Norway would also like to underline that the prime responsibility for the peaceful settlement of conflicts rests with the national Governments concerned. We would like to stress the significant contribution of the International Court of Justice in the solution of international disputes through peaceful means.

Norway fully supports the Secretary-General's call for States to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court and to resort to it in order to settle disputes and to promote the rule of law in international relations.

We, as Member States, need to do more than express our support for the Secretary-General's vision of moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We must take ownership. It is through our leadership in the United Nations organs and the governing councils of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies that this change can materialize. Ultimately, these questions are linked to the thorny issues of authority and division of labour within the United Nations system.

As conflict prevention transcends the boundaries between the mandates of the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council, we Member States have a particular responsibility to provide for a unified United Nations approach.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I wish to thank the President for having convened this debate on the prevention of armed conflict. The Secretary-General has provided us with an in-depth analysis of the main factors contributing to the eruption, escalation and resurgence of armed conflict.

What makes the report innovative is not only that it takes into account the immediate and structural causes that fuel conflict, but also that it turns these insights into specific recommendations designed to improve preventive actions. In fact, the report sends a very clear message: all the work that the United Nations does in all of its various realms of activity has preventive potential.

Allow me to comment on specific points in the report and to add some specific suggestions as a contribution to the establishment of a culture of prevention. My first point is about the General Assembly. In recommendation 1, the Secretary-General affirms the need for more effective action by the General Assembly, using the powers enshrined in Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter. This presupposes a real determination and political will on the part of the Member States to have the General Assembly play an effective role in situations that require preventive action or in cases where the Security Council is outrightly paralysed. We also support recommendation 2, on considering possible ways of enhancing interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council on conflict prevention. In this respect, the idea of setting up an open-ended working group of the General Assembly, to help its President identify specific cases, as priority matters for prevention, seems useful. However, it is our view that that group could not confine itself to serving as an advisory body for the President. Rather, it should become a permanent standing mechanism for following up on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

My second point is about the role played by the Security Council. We support the Secretary-General's intention to submit periodic regional reports on situations calling for preventive action. It is our view, all the same, that those reports should in principle be circulated not just as Security Council documents but also as General Assembly and Economic and Social Council documents. We see no obstacle that would keep the Security Council from establishing a subsidiary body responsible for examining cases of conflict prevention on a regular basis, as envisaged in recommendation 3. The importance of this issue, however, makes it advisable for it to be dealt with at the highest level of representation, in informal consultations or in public or private sessions. It would not seem appropriate to restrict the discussion of conflict prevention to the level of experts.

The Economic and Social Council, in order to join in the effort, would have to endow itself with the kind of machinery that would favour its being able to play an effective role. Recommendation 4 sets out the idea of setting aside a specific high-level Economic and Social Council segment to the role of development in conflict prevention. That high-level debate could lead to the establishment of a specific Economic and Social Council segment to deal with conflict prevention and peace-building, with the flexibility required for holding consultations throughout the year. One of its functions might be that of examining reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Economic and Social Council, as well as reports of ad hoc advisory groups, such as the one created in 1998 on Haiti.

The role of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat is my next point. We enthusiastically support the proposals in recommendation 9 of the report regarding the role played by the Secretary-General. We view with particular interest the use of fact-finding and confidence-building missions. The possibility that the Secretary-General could be backed up by an informal network of eminent personalities in his efforts for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution is a very valuable idea. Moreover, we consider that the offices and political missions of the Department of Political Affairs in various countries and regions in conflict should periodically report on what they are doing, not only to the Security Council but also to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly.

Turning to disarmament, we support recommendations 14 and 15, on conventional weapons and small arms. We hope that the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons will give fresh impetus to efforts to reverse the trend towards greater availability of arms in conflict regions. We stress the importance of cooperation among all States to make sure that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms becomes an effective universal instrument.

We are struck, however, by the fact that in the report there is no reference to nuclear disarmament and its importance in the context of conflict prevention. Brazil wishes to reaffirm its position that it is imperative for us to advance towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, and most particularly nuclear weapons.

Economic and social development and the prevention of armed conflict are two central objectives for our Organization. We must foster international cooperation to realize both objectives, each having its own merits. Development is worthwhile in and of itself, just conflict prevention must be effected because of its own imperatives. Even if there were no conflicts in the world, development and overcoming poverty would be a moral imperative for us. By the same token, even if we were all developed, it would be necessary to keep conflicts from erupting between and within countries.

It is no less true, however, that conflict situations are fuelled by, among other factors, decisive structural causes, such as inequality, poverty and marginalization. Therefore, strategies to prevent conflict, eradicate poverty and promote democracy and economic and social development are complementary.

The Secretary-General's report advances an overall vision of system-wide efforts that are essential in combating the structural causes of armed conflicts. In this context, we firmly support recommendation 29, on the need to increase international cooperation and the resources available for development assistance.

Reading the Secretary-General's report raised questions in our minds as to the contribution to be made by humanitarian actors in preventing armed conflicts. To be sure, the political resolution of conflicts hinges essentially on the parties concerned, with the support of the international community, particularly the Security Council. However, there are many instances of situations where humanitarian actors have played a major role in the quest for a solution to conflicts — for example, by providing neutral venues for meetings and by creating communication channels between belligerents. Humanitarian assistance work is also fundamental in order to prevent the despair and defencelessness of refugees, the displaced and the injured from feeding the cycle of violence and exacerbating the situation.

It is also true that mechanisms designed to protect human rights can have great bearing on the risk of crisis or of conflict. For example, reports by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on summary, arbitrary and extrajudicial executions had drawn attention to the danger of genocide in Rwanda. Unfortunately, the correct response by the international community did not materialize. Beyond the preventive role of protection machinery, it is also important to strengthen tools for the promotion of human rights, including in particular the technical assistance services of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

I cannot fail to note that in the United Nations we constantly feel a certain amount of frustration at the gap between our ability to frame proposals and our lack of means to implement them. Obstacles do not often arise because of divergent assessments of problems; there is often consensus within the Organization about the overall approach to solving major problems. This is a delicate question that cannot be resolved in the abstract. It requires a change of attitude in the Organization's daily functioning, specifically in assessing the implementation of decisions on which we have all agreed. I sincerely hope that we will meet the high hopes engendered by our near unanimity on the importance of preventing armed conflict. Our major challenge is to turn that consensus into visible and tangible responses.

Mr. Šerkšnys (Lithuania): Lithuania aligns itself with the statement delivered this morning on behalf of the European Union.

Lithuania wholeheartedly welcomes the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/55/985). The report highlights in a structured manner the fact that globalization has eliminated the convenient luxury of closing our eyes to faraway or latent conflicts. That luxury carries an enormous price tag in terms of human costs and destroyed economies and nations. The Security Council, in its presidential statement of 20 July 2000 (S/PRST/2000/25), emphasized the overriding humanitarian and moral imperative and the economic advantages of preventing the outbreak and escalation of conflicts. The challenge now is to engage in prevention not just rhetorically but also in practice.

That is always easier said than done. Prevention has to be the cornerstone of our collective security

system. Yet for really effective prevention, a broader definition of security — one encompassing structural, economic and social issues — is called for. I will not attempt to come up with something radically new on this point, but will rather draw on the three foremost pillars, which, to my mind, are crucial if we are to take firm hold of preventive thinking: development, the role of regional organizations and the role of the United Nations.

First of all, conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable development are mutually reinforcing activities. An effective conflict prevention strategy requires that causes of structural violence be addressed through good governance, the rule of law, democracy, respect for human rights, sustained and equitable development, and responsibility and commitment of political leaders. It requires the engagement of the United Nations, its agencies and programmes, and the Bretton Wood institutions over the long term and in a more integrated fashion. Because, all too often, poor countries have too few economic and political resources with which to manage conflicts; they need assistance in terms of targeted development assistance, new trade arrangements, debt relief and political mediation.

Yet that will hardly be a panacea unless there is a firm commitment by local and regional actors to peaceful settlement and to principles of prevention. Many conflicts are inseparable from their regional contexts. In that regard, I wish to emphasize the central role of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention. Because of their intimate knowledge and interests, they are best placed to detect possible fault lines and get around problems before they spin out of control.

Europe has been blessed with a wealth of regional organizations and arrangements that over the years have created a highly integrated community with institutions and practices strong and widespread enough to assure and promote peace and security. It is no wonder, therefore, that Lithuania, along with other Central and Eastern European democracies, is working hard to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and of the European Union fairly soon. That is the best preventive strategy against the vulnerabilities of the modern world. It is a win-win situation for Europe as a whole.

Elsewhere, regional and subregional organizations, such as the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Community of West African States, are making rapid strides in beefing up their capacity for conflict prevention. The international community should be more vigorous in providing further assistance, expertise and training to those and other organizations in their efforts to enhance institutional capacity and peacekeeping capability. Within the mandate of Chapter VIII of the Charter, the United Nations and, particularly, the Security Council have to look for further ways to develop regional prevention strategies in cooperation with regional organizations.

Whereas regional organizations should ideally be the first to ring the alarm bell and douse the flames, more decisive action on the part of the United Nations in addressing crises is needed. Article 1 of the Charter speaks of conflict prevention as a primary purpose of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. In the course of its history the United Nations has more often than not been zealously preoccupied with troubleshooting rather than with peace-building. A culture of reaction must now give way to a culture of prevention.

The Secretary-General's report contains nearly 30 recommendations aimed at mobilizing the collective potential of the United Nations system. Most of the recommendations deserve the full support of my country. A number of them do not need substantial financial resources. Because the time is short, I would rather dwell on just a few of them.

Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter provide much latitude for the General Assembly to take up and consider conflict prevention in all its aspects. Building a meaningful interaction between the Council and the Assembly, in particular on peacebuilding, is a forward-thinking proposal in that regard. The framework for such interaction should be elaborated.

Article 24 of the Charter confers upon the Security Council a key role in the prevention of armed conflict. Regrettably, too often the signs of escalating conflict have been left unheard or unheeded by the Council, because either political will or resources, or both, were in short supply. The Council clearly needs to address conflict prevention in a more systematic manner. The recommendation that the Council consider some kind of mechanism, such as an informal working

group, for discussing prevention cases on a continuous basis goes a way towards fostering a culture of prevention.

New boundaries of the conflict — the economic ones — have to be addressed. If States believe they can profit from conflicts, conflicts are likely to occur. The Security Council, along with the business community, should continue its work to develop more effective measures aimed at reducing the profits of war and targeted at the illegal exploitation, sale and transport of natural resources and related factors that fuel armed conflicts. The elaboration of a new approach to the application, scope, depth and monitoring of sanctions is clearly overdue.

The past two years have seen a welcome resumption by the Security Council of fact-finding missions to regions at risk. An understanding of the underlying causes of each conflict, gained through such visits, is a fundamental premise of successful prevention. It ensures that preventive strategies are based on local initiatives and commitments. At times of crisis, a mission may be helpful in a bid to drum up support for preventive deployment.

A successful conflict prevention strategy will require cooperation between the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and other United Nations agencies. The mandate of the Economic and Social Council entitles it to play a critical role in conflict prevention. A more focused and formalized discussion on conflict prevention has to emerge between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. Although the Secretary General's credentials in conflict prevention speak for themselves, his traditional roles in this area need to be strengthened. We encourage him to develop and enhance his preventive diplomacy efforts in the ways outlined in the report.

No matter how much preventive pondering and planning is done, the actual test of decisiveness and will comes when preventive deployment is called for. More active use of preventive deployment makes sense. Such deployment, launched at an early stage, will always provide reliable support for the country concerned in its progress along the path of transformation. We also believe that in preventive peacekeeping the civilian police offer untapped potential. In this context, we support proposals of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations aimed at strengthening relevant support structures at Headquarters and the policy framework for civilian policing.

The absence of armed conflict in society does not mean peace. The more arms there are in a context of injustice, the greater the impact of these arms. There is a pressing need for a more focused programme of action to address the proliferation and misuse of small arms. We will strive for such a comprehensive action plan at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

Another essential part of preventive strategy must be disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes. They should be included in the mandates of United Nations peace operations from the very outset. No less important is ensuring that there is a general framework for financial and technical assistance in combating arms proliferation and in implementing DDR programmes.

Any deployment of peace operations, whether preventive or reactive, places an enormous strain on the United Nations Secretariat. Its capacity and resources are stretched thin. Lithuania supports many of the Brahimi report's recommendations, along with those of the Secretary-General, which are key to doing a genuine overhaul of the United Nations peacekeeping enterprise and are designed to strengthen that capacity within the Secretariat.

Lithuania also supports the Secretary-General's call for adequate resources for the Department of Political Affairs so that it can carry out its responsibilities as the focal point in conflict prevention. The establishment of a new unit for system-wide strategic planning and analysis would enhance a strategic approach to conflict prevention on the part of the Organization. With regard to the funding of preventive action from the regular budget, rather than from extra-budgetary resources, I consider that the time has come to discuss putting preventive actions on a more stable basis.

In conclusion, let me say that effective conflict prevention will be an increasingly important area of United Nations efforts in the years to come. As conflict prevention transcends the boundaries between the mandates of many United Nations bodies, we have a responsibility to provide a unified United Nations approach. The 10 principles proposed by the Secretary-

General are a blueprint for this, and Lithuania fully supports them.

Mr. Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me first of all to join the delegations that have welcomed this important initiative for a dialogue and reflection on the prevention of armed conflict. This is one of the most important concepts of international collective security and, at the same time, is one of the essential purposes of the Charter of the Organization. My country wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report on this subject, which we have read with great interest. It will undoubtedly contribute towards the establishment of an enlightening and in-depth debate concerning alternatives for action in this area and at all levels.

Joint action guaranteeing international peace and security and promoting the search for development is an objective of highest priority and the basic essence of the Organization. The management of international conflicts implies a vast range of specific efforts and strategies that go beyond a mere diplomatic or military presence, or a perspective that is strictly linked to the sphere of security.

Within this comprehensive vision, and as has been emphasized in diverse forums on previous occasions, the prevention of conflicts is an essential pillar constituting the international community's most appropriate and least onerous alternative for maintaining international peace and security.

The Secretary-General's report affirms a principle that has been repeatedly emphasized: multidimensional efforts for international peace and security are neither the privilege, the specific function nor the exclusive jurisdiction of a single organization on the international scene. The United Nations participates as the main actor, but in coordination with other international and regional organizations, groups of States, countries directly involved and the civil society of the affected States; each of these levels participates in accordance with its own capacities and responsibilities. We naturally welcome the efforts that the Secretariat is making to endow its structure with internal coherence on this important issue.

The report also establishes that preventive action involves the interaction of the principal organs of the United Nations, which requires precise coordination and the assignment of specific, complementary roles, as established by the Charter of the Organization.

In our opinion, this assertion offers a clear answer to the demand of many States within the Organization. These States find it very difficult to accept from the logical point of view, and very difficult to understand from the practical point of view, that a single organ within the United Nations system — the Security Council — should be the exclusive body for considering the conceptualization and establishment of the criteria for action and the philosophy to be used in the maintenance of international peace, discussing and regulating matters that are within the natural jurisdiction of other forums and organs of the Organization. This is even more difficult to accept and understand, as the report points out, when the matters dealt with are of a multidimensional nature and when, in many cases, they involve specific measures for consolidating peace in conflicts that are basically of an internal nature and require that their root causes be addressed.

We are convinced that, though these facts are acknowledged, an extensive exercise of reflection and exploration has yet to be undertaken in order to define the role that can be played by both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in strengthening the Organization's role and capacity for action in the vast range of actions relating to international peace and security. Apart from preventing conflicts, these actions include consolidating peace, dealing with the causes of the conflict and creating solid foundations that will promote the strengthening of institutions and a minimum of development within the societies involved.

It is our opinion that because of its universal nature, the General Assembly is the most appropriate body to create the consensus required, which will be the fruit of dialogue and coordination with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The Economic and Social Council could act as a catalyst for the preventive efforts of the various programmes of the United Nations system.

The development of a clear legal framework defining this role for the General Assembly, with specific rules and criteria for action, would greatly contribute to this purpose. This role is based on the general support for the General Assembly because of its representativity and legitimacy, in both its membership and its rules of procedure and working methods. These characteristics make it the most

appropriate forum to seek consensus on the subjects in which the interests and actions are shared by all.

Peru believes that each of the organs of the Organization must be capable of establishing a specific framework for action in the fields of peace and security, particularly in conflict prevention. Beyond the recommendations of the Secretary-General, they can incorporate their own ideas and proposals in such a framework.

Peru has emphasized on various occasions that the measures designed to reduce poverty and achieve economic growth are essential elements for eliminating the root causes of conflict and, as was also mentioned in the Brahimi report, a step towards preventing conflicts.

In this regard, we observe with satisfaction the emphasis that the Secretary-General has given to this important aspect. He has called on all States to increase development assistance on the understanding that poverty in itself is a cause of instability and conflict and that no better contribution can be made to international peace than the promotion of growth and sustainable development for all States. In this vein, the upcoming high-level meeting on financing for development will be an exceptional opportunity for taking the pulse of the international community and measuring its interest in making a real contribution towards international peace and security.

Another aspect of great importance is the determination of the causes of conflict. General strategies for cooperation in this connection must be the fruit of consensus. This work must be done by the competent bodies of our Organization, but especially by the States involved, each State having the basic responsibility for tackling the causes.

In this regard, we agree that the role of the United Nations is mainly to support national Governments and find solutions to these problems, on the understanding that the participation and support of the State concerned is indispensable to the implementation of an effective preventive strategy and the elimination of the elements of tension that exist in its territory. This leading participation and the requirement of the consent of the host country for the dispatch of preventive missions are also principles based on international law. We are pleased that they have been included in this report.

Peru will continue to carefully follow what emerges from these debates and the consensus on preventive action that may be reached based on the Secretary-General's report. We hope that this will make it possible to establish an efficient international capability along these lines with the important support of the United Nations. Such action, as indicated in the report, must be based on the principles of national consent, mutual confidence and respect, and cooperation.

Mr. Benítez Sáenz (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The issue of the prevention of armed conflicts, which the General Assembly is analysing today, has been a source of concern to Uruguay here at the United Nations since the very inception of this Organization. That is why, in line with the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, which guides our foreign policy, we have been involved in various peacekeeping operations under Chapter VI of the Charter.

We are particularly grateful to the Secretary-General for his invaluable report dated 7 June, in which he sets forth a strategy by which the work the United Nations in this realm can fulfil realizes its maximum potential by developing a culture of prevention in which action takes the place of rhetoric. We wish to highlight some of the basic premises underpinning this report that we especially share. This applies particularly to the idea that the fundamental responsibility for conflict prevention rests with the respective national Governments and that a major goal of our preventive work must be to deal with the deep-rooted social, economic, cultural and environmental causes of conflict.

Once again, the Charter, on this subject, as with others, provides us with a clear-cut juridical framework on which to base a mandate and thus to be able to achieve prevention. By virtue of its first Article we have committed ourselves to taking "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace". The principal organs of the United Nations have their contribution to make to conflict prevention. But we ascribe to the General Assembly a particularly important role, on the basis of Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter, given that this body has the greatest degree of sovereign representation. We agree with the Secretary-General that we must be more active in making use of these powers.

We also agree with the Secretary-General on the need to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity for action by giving greater latitude for confidence-building missions in areas of potential conflict, through preventive strategies involving regional organizations and the support of informal networks that may help make conflict prevention possible. We believe that actions taken by "Groups of Friends" can be reinforced by including representatives of the international financing institutions, given that economic responses tend in most instances to rein in the escalation of conflicts that nowadays occur almost exclusively in the developing world.

Uruguay wishes to express its most fervent support for the efforts that are being made to prevent conflicts. The credibility and effectiveness of our Organization depend in large measure on successes attained in peacefully resolving disputes, which are growing ever more complex and harder to resolve.

Lastly, we wish to support especially the initiative to establish a consultative mechanism within the United Nations — as we see it, this should be done through the General Assembly — to strengthen coordination and interaction between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in dealing with conflict prevention and peace-building.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): It is really good to see you, Sir, presiding over this chief deliberative organ of the United Nations, which, it seems, in the true spirit of the Millennium Declaration, is seeking to assert its authority by moving in recent months like a homeless person from room to room and finally taking shelter in the Trusteeship Council Chamber.

I hope that the general membership will be given an explanation as to why this chief deliberative organ of the United Nations is moving from room to room. Sometimes there are valid reasons. The General Assembly Hall was under repair and renovation. But then, there is no reason for the General Assembly to move from its own premises only to accommodate any other event, particularly this afternoon, when no event is taking place in the General Assembly Hall. So I think we need to do something at least for the dignity of the General Assembly. I think that I speak on behalf of — or, at least, I am taking the liberty of representing the aspirations of — the entire membership by bringing the matter to the notice of the Secretariat through the good offices of the President.

Let me begin by thanking the President for convening this meeting on an issue which is of vital concern to us all. It is indeed appropriate for the General Assembly, which is the most representative organ of this Organization, to be deliberating on the Secretary-General's report on the prevention of armed conflict.

We admire the hard work and earnestness with which this report has been prepared by the Secretary-General and his able team as a first attempt at tackling this complex issue. In our view, the Secretary-General's report serves as a very useful basis for discussions, both on what has been included in it as well as on what has not. Some of the basic assumptions and premises in the report seem to have inherent contradictions. I am repeating this comment; this is a statement that I made earlier in a meeting of the Security Council.

While we appreciate, for instance, the report's focus on the role of Member States in preventing armed conflicts, we are not inclined to take a charitable view of absolving the United Nations itself of its own Charter obligations as far as the fundamental objective of the promotion and preservation of peace is concerned. States and civil society alone cannot be held primarily responsible for conflict prevention, especially when inter-State conflicts are involved. The ultimate responsibility to negotiate and enforce peace rests with this international body, especially in instances where two or more Member States are involved in a dispute or conflict. If the opposite were to be true, there would be no justification for having the United Nations, and we would then, perhaps, be approaching Amnesty International or the Ted Turner Foundation.

It is gratifying to note that the Secretary-General's report refers to identifying and addressing conflict-prone disputes at an early stage so as to prevent violence and bloodshed. But how can this objective be translated into reality? That is a question that needs an answer. Indeed, it can happen not through hedging or avoiding an issue, but through displaying the political will to address it. Sad though it is, more often than not political expediency and the self-serving interests of a few, rather than the collective good, dictate the agenda of this world body. Resolution after resolution is passed while disputes fester, blood spills and precious lives are lost.

Here I would like to give two examples which are a living testimony to the apathy and inaction of the United Nations. These are the issues of Palestine and of Kashmir. Both have their genesis in the denial of peoples' right to self-determination. Both have caused wars and still remain dangerous flash-points, with serious implications for regional and global peace. Both are a legacy of political injustice and a manifestation of ongoing repression. Decades of indifference and State oppression cannot destroy the penchant for freedom and justice of the Kashmiri and Palestinian people. Sadly, however, their agony continues while the United Nations remains a silent spectator.

The Secretary-General's report makes a reference to the importance of addressing root causes as a means of achieving conflict prevention. We welcome this observation. It is, indeed, a realistic approach. What is difficult to understand is the diagnosis that such root causes are essentially economic, social or cultural and underlie the political symptoms of conflict. That is unrealistic; in fact, the reverse is true. Many other examples, in addition to those of Kashmir and Palestine, could be given to prove that political, not social and economic, factors are behind ongoing conflicts such as those in Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the African Great Lakes region. The United Nations should be erring on the side of caution, as a wrong diagnosis leads to a wrong prescription.

The Charter clearly prescribes what role is to be played by the United Nations and its Secretary-General in implementing its provisions and its own resolutions — here, I would like specifically to mention the modalities that are detailed in Chapter VI of the Charter for the pacific settlement of disputes in order to prevent conflicts. Not doing so because of political expediency or on the basis of mere technicalities is a disservice to the Charter and cannot be condoned. Inaction on the part of the Security Council on its own resolutions, as in the case of Kashmir, and selectivity, as in the case of Afghanistan, suggest a partisan approach responsible for the perpetuation of these conflicts. Selectivity or discrimination between regions and situations is not only inexcusable but a negation of the very principles for which this world body was created.

We support the recommendation in the report that the General Assembly should consider the more active use of its powers to prevent armed conflict. We also agree that the Secretary-General should play a key role in conflict prevention through the existing means and mechanisms at its disposal. In my statement during the open debate on this report in the Security Council on 21 June, I stipulated certain broad and concrete parameters which could form the basis for preventing armed conflict. I recommended a whole list of measures, and I hope that our proposals will be carefully considered by the Secretariat.

As a responsible and law-abiding member of the international community, Pakistan is conscious of its obligations for promoting peace and stability in the world. In our own region, Pakistan is doing everything possible to prevent future conflicts. Even at this moment, Pakistan is taking a bold step in that direction, as our President embarks on a historic visit to India with the aim of promoting durable peace in South Asia.

We need the support, encouragement and active engagement of the international community, particularly the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility for peace and security throughout the world, to achieve and sustain peace, which has thus far remained elusive only because the root cause of conflicts and tensions in our region has not been addressed. Prevention of armed conflict and peaceful settlement of a dispute is as much the responsibility of the international community as it is ours. It can work only through a partnership between the United Nations and its Member States, with the former playing the lead role.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): In a disturbing number of conflicts around the world, civilians have become the principal targets. Women and children, the elderly and the sick have been attacked and methodically driven from their homes. Children have been systemically brutalized, recruited as soldiers, maimed and traumatized. Genocide, ethnic cleansing and disregard for human life and human values have assumed new proportions and clearly justify the growing international consensus that the prevention of armed conflict is more cost-effective in social, economic and human terms than addressing a conflict after it has erupted.

My delegation therefore thanks the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and thought-provoking report, presented in response to the request of the Security Council during Jamaica's presidency in July 2000. His analysis provides a useful framework for

assessing the role of the United Nations system in the prevention of armed conflict and provides an important platform for further action.

During last month's debate in the Security Council, my delegation addressed those recommendations in the report directed to the Security Council in relation to its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Today, we will focus on other recommendations falling within the purview of the General Assembly, which has a critical role to play in strengthening the capacity of the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflict and in creating a culture of prevention, which must form the basis for sustainable peace.

We agree with the Secretary-General that creating such a culture of prevention will require a more active use of the powers of the General Assembly under Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter. There can be no question that the effectiveness of the General Assembly in a number of traditional conflict-prevention strategies needs urgent improvement. We are therefore pleased that the Secretary-General has made specific reference to the role of the General Assembly in the promotion of practices for the peaceful settlement of disputes. We believe that the Assembly has not utilized fully all the mechanisms at its disposal and should take urgent steps to revisit mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the establishment of a panel of inquiry and conciliation and the resort to a commission of good offices, mediation and conciliation. The timely application of preventive diplomacy through these mechanisms is critical.

In the light of the multifaceted nature of conflicts, we also believe that the Assembly's role must include a wide spectrum of responses in the areas of disarmament, human rights and development, among others. Such an approach would give priority to the deep-rooted socio-economic, cultural, political and structural causes of conflict, which must be addressed if our efforts at conflict prevention are to bear success.

My delegation therefore supports the Secretary-General's view that the wide area of responsibility of the General Assembly provides the opportunity for conflict prevention to be integrated into its consideration of a number of items on its current agenda.

It is clear that no one organ will always have the comparative advantage in addressing an impending conflict situation. The General Assembly, like the Security Council, has limitations and cannot act in all circumstances. At times, the most appropriate actor may be the Secretary-General, the Economic and Social Council or related agencies of the United Nations system. The General Assembly has an important role to play in complementing actions taken by other bodies, including the Security Council, particularly in the areas of structural prevention, to ensure that crises do not arise in the first place, or, if they do, that they do not recur.

In this regard, Jamaica supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly consider ways of enhancing its interaction with the Security Council on conflict prevention, particularly in developing long-term conflict-prevention and peace-building strategies. We also strongly support the attention given by the Secretary-General in the report to the need for collaboration among all organs and agencies of the United Nations system, as well as with civil society.

The report has rightly highlighted the need for the United Nations system, including its funds and programmes, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, to integrate a conflict-prevention perspective into their operations and to ensure that adequate development action and resources are forthcoming for conflict-prevention activities as well as for post-conflict peace-building.

We also support the Secretary-General's appeal to the international donor community to increase the flow of development assistance to developing countries, and in particular to give serious consideration to the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Financing for Development.

It is also important to give special attention to those recommendations aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to develop and support conflict- prevention measures by the Secretary-General and the organs of the United Nations. In particular, we wish to draw attention to recommendation 11, which calls on the General Assembly to provide the Department of Political Affairs, in its capacity as focal point for conflict prevention, with adequate resources to carry out its responsibilities for conflict prevention and peace-building in the United Nations system.

We also wish to highlight some the recommendations aimed at enhancing the capacity of

the United Nations to target the needs of children, including adolescents, in situations of potential conflict, as an important aspect of long-term conflict-prevention strategy; to strengthen media and public information capacity to counter hate messages in conflict-prone situations; and to provide increased resources for the activities of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, particularly in the prevention of transnational crime, drug trafficking and illicit trade in small arms.

It is timely that the report on the prevention of armed conflict is being discussed in the General Assembly simultaneously with the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Speaking at that Conference, Jamaica stressed the clear link between the uncontrolled spread and use of small arms and light weapons and the increased threat to personal security, good governance, human rights and social justice. For us it is clear that any preventive strategy must include effective mechanisms to address the spread of these weapons, which pose a formidable challenge to the economic and social development of developing countries and, by extension, to peace and stability.

If the United Nations is to enhance its preventive capacity, contribute effectively to sustainable peace and create a genuine culture of prevention in which States seek the Organization's assistance in resolving disputes, there are a number of factors that must form a central part of the United Nations response.

First, the United Nations system must make every effort to develop urgent, viable and effective approaches that enjoy the support of the wider membership of the Organization and that respect the principles and provisions of the Charter.

Secondly, the political, institutional, social and economic factors that give rise to conflicts must be addressed at the earliest possible stage through non-intrusive, collaborative processes which focus on both short and long-term responses.

Thirdly, States should be encouraged to take primary responsibility for the prevention of armed conflict, and, as stressed by the Secretary-General, conflict prevention should have national ownership.

Fourthly, development, poverty eradication and the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable peace during the post-conflict phase must be prioritized when action is being contemplated, given that post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation are crucial in preventing the recurrence of armed conflict.

Fifthly, cooperation with a wide range of actors at the international, regional, subregional and community levels will ensure enhanced preventive strategies that respond to the peculiarities of the situation in each State.

In his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, the Secretary-General addressed a number of these issues. It is imperative that these also be kept in view when considering conflict at the global level, and we look forward to the work of the open-ended Ad Hoc Working Group which is considering the implementation of the recommendations contained in that report.

We also look forward to the results of discussions on the prevention of armed conflict in other forums and hope that the recommendations emerging from this system-wide attention to the issue will be quickly translated into response.

While we are here discussing abstract mechanisms, we must not forget that armed conflict has a human face, often that of a child whose safety and well-being are jeopardized and who is denied the opportunity to grow to adulthood in health, peace and dignity. It is for this child that we must rise to the challenge and make the prevention of armed conflict the mainstay of the United Nations action, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile) *(spoke in Spanish)*: It is an honour for the delegation of Chile to contribute to the development of a subject of special relevance, the prevention of armed conflict, in the light of the report submitted by the Secretary-General, which we appreciate greatly because of its content and timeliness. It makes an invaluable contribution to the progressive development of this complex subject matter. We will continue to follow attentively the conclusions emerging from the debate on this subject in the various bodies of the United Nations and will actively participate in working out elements of possible consensus that may emerge.

My country, like the majority of the members of the international community, notes with concern that armed conflicts continue to be a real threat to

development in many places around the world, particularly in the poorest areas. We therefore believe that there is no higher purpose than that of pooling all our efforts to prevent these conflicts. This form of prevention is based essentially on fostering security and human development. Safeguarding human security in its broadest sense is the essential mission of the United Nations, and one of the most effective ways of carrying out this mission is through real and lasting prevention.

The report submitted to us by the Secretary-General is very comprehensive and should be the focus of very careful examination by the Member States. In this statement, we wish to highlight just some of the aspects that are of particular interest to us, leaving for later the result of our exhaustive analysis. We thus share, as does the report, the idea that primary responsibility for preventing conflict rests essentially on Governments, without prejudice to the relevant role played by civil society. International, regional and subregional organizations have a role to play in supporting national efforts.

The points just made do not take anything away from the preventive diplomacy that has been pursued by the Secretary-General, which has had concrete results in eliminating or stemming conflict. In this respect, Chile encourages the Secretary-General to go on playing that fundamental role, in line with the prerogatives conferred upon him by Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, as he has been doing so successfully thus far.

We welcome the announcement of the initiation of the practice providing the Security Council with periodic regional and subregional reports on threats to international peace and security, and we deem important the proposal to establish an ad hoc working group for ongoing discussions in the area of prevention. By the same token, we hope that the periodic reports to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Security Council will also be made available to all the Members of the Organization. We consider the proposal for effective interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council in conflict prevention to be highly important and necessary. The Secretary-General has made some proposals along these lines that my delegation finds interesting, but their viability must be discussed. In this connection, we recommend to the presidency that priority attention be paid to the conclusions that may be gleaned from the various statements in this Chamber, so that we can explore those approaches enjoying the broadest support.

My country realizes that the deployment of resources for establishing peace is an essential ingredient in any national or international initiative to prevent, contain or resolve conflicts. Therefore, we underline the need to give priority to diplomatic initiatives, in line with the stipulations of Article 33 of the Charter, since these are unquestionably the most economical, easiest to carry out and often most effective courses of action.

Early warning machinery plays a relevant role in conflict prevention. However, without rapid action, such warning is of little use. Although my country notes that in recent years the capability of the United Nations has grown, this greater capability must lead to rapid and effective action, whether we are talking about diplomatic initiatives, deployment of a peacekeeping force or humanitarian intervention.

Chile agrees that the preventive deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces brings a calming presence and can prevent miscalculations that might trigger violent conflict. It can allow time for disagreements to be resolved through political means, allow for the strengthening of peace-building institutions and constitute a decisive tool for confidence-building. In the same vein, we support the inclusion of peace-building activities in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.

We share the Secretary-General's recommendations on disarmament, particularly those with regard to the need for greater transparency in arms purchases and military expenditures. At the same time, we note that the report does not mention an issue that seems important to us: the need to ban nuclear weapons.

The Government of Chile reaffirms its historical position of favouring peaceful means of resolving disputes and recognizes that the International Court of Justice, since its founding, has been playing a significant role in this area. We have made this point repeatedly, particularly when we supported the adoption of resolution 2625 (XXV) and the Manila Declaration. Our country endorses the Secretary-General's assertion that the Court today is more active than ever and that it can surely play a strong role in conflict prevention in its capacity as a judicial body,

empowered moreover to hand down advisory opinions. We therefore fully agree that, as he states in the report, there is a need for the Court to intensify its role along these lines. We support the Secretary-General's exhortation to States that when multilateral treaties are adopted under United Nations auspices, they should include clauses providing for submitting disputes to the Court. We also view as worthy of consideration the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly authorize him and other United Nations organs to take advantage of the advisory competence of the Court, something which does not take place at present.

We are certain that the promotion and protection of human rights can go a long way towards preventing conflicts. We reaffirm the entire commitment of the Chilean Government to children, which is why we endorse the report's statement that war-affected children should always be an explicit priority in efforts to prevent the initial occurrence of conflict as well as its recurrence. We also appreciate and encourage the active involvement of women in the peace process, because it makes a powerful contribution to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security.

I wish in conclusion to reaffirm the importance of the achievements outlined in the report. My country will continue carefully and constructively to study them, in line with its policy of supporting and promoting international peace and security.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): Among the many commendable initiatives taken by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, his effort to redirect the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention is one of the most significant. The pattern of responding to rather than anticipating a crisis is obviously deeply rooted, and the change towards a culture of prevention will therefore require time and, more important, political will. There has been progress: the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) recognized the necessity to promote a culture of prevention, and the report of the Secretary-General before us in document A/55/985 notes that a general consensus has emerged in that respect. Our collective mindset seems thus to be changing.

It is quite clear, however, that preventive approaches continue to be applied on a very exceptional basis only. Very little has changed in practice. We have looked at the failures of the United Nations in Bosnia and in Rwanda, but can we guarantee that such failures will not recur?

The Secretary-General's report notes in paragraph 160 that prevention "lies at the heart of the mandate of the United Nations". Indeed, putting prevention in its rightful place in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations is of crucial importance.

Cost-effectiveness is one of the major assets of preventive activities. It is of course obvious to everyone that prevention, especially when initiated at a very early stage, is less expensive than comprehensive operations aimed at the alleviation of suffering, reconstruction and reconciliation. The numbers quoted in paragraph 2 of the report add a more concrete dimension to that general understanding, and they are striking indeed. Funding will always be a crucial element in designing United Nations policy, and we therefore have to look at those numbers, as they speak clearly in favour of preventive approaches. But we must also not forget that human suffering, the destruction of the social fabric and long-term destabilization are the real price of armed conflict, and that human beings and especially children deprived of their future are paying it. The report emphasizes the economic dimension of prevention by making it clear that poverty is a major factor underlying the outbreak of armed conflicts, and by emphasizing the strong linkage between prevention of armed conflict and sustainable development. Investing in prevention thus also means protecting our own past investments.

With the advantages of prevention so obvious and undeniable, what keeps us from embracing the concept not only rhetorically but also in practice? One of the most important psychological barriers seems to be that the achievements of prevention are often not tangible or visible. Prevention, if carried out effectively, gains very little attention from the wider public or the mass media, does not create individual glory, and goes widely unnoticed. That, in fact, is the whole idea of prevention. Its success is hard to measure. If we look at the current situation in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, however, we can certainly appreciate the value of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force, whose mandate was unfortunately terminated at a most inopportune moment. It also seems difficult to acknowledge and tackle a problem before it has manifested itself as such. And, as the report states, existing problems usually take precedence over

potential ones. It would thus be naive to expect a quick and radical change towards prevention. This is a process of many small steps.

Post-conflict peace-building is clearly an area on which the United Nations should focus its preventive efforts. Societies which are traumatized by sometimes lengthy periods of armed conflict are particularly at risk, and the United Nations can make important contributions to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, among other things. Peace-building is not nation-building: national ownership is of critical importance for successful post-conflict peace-building, and we fully concur with the relevant principle contained in paragraph 169 of the report.

The increased attention given to this issue by the Security Council is a very important development, but the Secretariat needs to be better equipped to live up to its tasks in this respect. We have been ready to contribute to the establishment of a peace-building unit within the Department for Political Affairs for quite some time, and we hope that the unit will sooner rather than later start playing what must be a catalytic role in the area of peace-building.

Peace-building is also a case in point with respect to the stronger involvement of women. Again, the Security Council has taken an important step forward in adopting its resolution 1325 (2000). We must address not only the differential impact of armed conflict on women, but, more important, must also recognize how important a role women very often play in times of and immediately following armed conflict. Full participation of and ownership by women is thus essential for achieving the desired results in post-conflict situations. We also continue to believe that the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General sends a very clear message to national constituencies in that respect and can have a tremendous positive impact. Unfortunately, such appointments continue to be few and far between.

Preventing armed conflict means first and foremost addressing its root causes. It has been noted time and again that the world is going through an era of internal armed conflicts. These are very often rooted in the disaffection of a specific community within a State or in tensions between such a community and a central Government or, more rarely, another community. We believe that it is of the utmost importance for States to develop mechanisms which allow for peaceful means, based on dialogue and a set of agreed principles, to address such situations before they turn into armed conflicts. A meaningful and flexible application of the right of self-determination seems to us to provide the perfect legal framework for such mechanisms. They must not violate the principle of territorial integrity. We fully agree that the application of such mechanisms, carried out with international assistance, far from undermining the sovereignty of States, can actually help strengthen it.

This is the beginning of a lengthy and complex process. Political will is required, and so is political leadership. It is thus of crucial importance that the Secretary-General continue to play a visionary and proactive role, and that he avail himself fully of the competence given him under Article 99 of the Charter. We will continue to give our full support to all his endeavours in that respect.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me note that the full text of my statement is available to delegations; to save time and to spare the interpreters, I shall summarize it now.

History has shown that a truly effective conflict prevention strategy cannot succeed without steps being taken to fight poverty, underdevelopment and economic and social inequities. The gap between rich and poor will continue to widen if no steps are taken to establish a just, equitable and sustainable international economic order. Here, strengthened official development assistance, a final resolution of the debt problem and fair prices for third-world exports are among the efforts that could help provide all the peoples of the South with new opportunities for progress and development. Along these lines, we fully agree with the assessments of the Secretary-General, including his proposal that the funds currently devoted to the implementation of military measures could be devoted to reducing poverty and achieving equitable and sustainable development. This would contribute even further to reducing the risk of war and disaster.

This premise further confirms that the General Assembly, given its composition and powers, is the organ that must play the central role in conflict prevention. Therefore, it is our view that this debate in the General Assembly must not remain an isolated event without appropriate follow-up. The General Assembly must systematically deal with conflict prevention in all its depth and breadth, in order to

adopt timely decisions and specific mandates. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly make more effective use of its powers in relation to conflict prevention, particularly with respect to Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter.

Revitalizing the General Assembly necessarily means that it must exercise all its powers to elaborate the conflict prevention strategy of the United Nations. We hope the process recently set in motion by the President of the General Assembly, designed to revitalize the work of this organ, will indeed have a positive impact on the role played by the General Assembly in this respect. To achieve this, we could adopt a series of measures.

The General Assembly should also receive the periodic regional or subregional reports on threats to international peace and security that the Secretary-General envisages beginning to submit to the Security Council. There should also be periodic informative and detailed presentations by the Secretariat on potential conflict situations, as in the Security Council. Another possible measure is that the General Assembly could consider dispatching fact-finding missions with multidisciplinary expert support to potential conflict areas, with the objective of devising preventive strategies and assessing the possibility of immediately creating an appropriate follow-up mechanism for dealing with matters of prevention, open to all Members States. This could take the form of a working group, which, among other things, would study the Secretary-General's recommendations in detail and prepare specific suggestions on what specific actions could be taken.

All of these possible measures must strictly comply with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, including full respect for the principles of sovereign equality, political independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in domestic affairs. Likewise, preventive strategies must be suited to the specific necessities of the countries and regions in question, and, at all times, the Governments directly involved must give their consent and support to any measures proposed.

We agree with the Secretary-General that increasing coherence and capability within the United Nations system on matters of conflict prevention is a priority. But to achieve this, the interaction between the principal organs of the United Nations must become clear and effective. That is not the case today. For instance, we agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should have a more active role in conflict prevention. But what is especially required is effective interaction between the General Assembly and the Security Council. Currently, their interaction is virtually non-existent, despite the fact that the Council, as the Charter stipulates, acts on behalf of all the Members of the United Nations. That is the only condition that can lend true legitimacy to its actions. In this context, the annual report presented by the Security Council to the General Assembly is far from complying with even the minimum requirements for promoting real interaction. Also, the special reports stipulated by the Charter continue not to be issued. This reality reaffirms our conviction that the reform of the Security Council is not only necessary, it is urgent. Without the required transparency, and so long as we maintain the double standards to which the Council has accustomed us, it will be difficult for other organs to play the role that is legitimately theirs in this crucial area and the Council will continue to play a hegemonic and intrusive role. This state of affairs does nothing to further the necessary unity of the Organization, nor to allow it to fulfil its real functions in conflict prevention.

Suffice it to point out that the systematic resort to Chapter VII of the Charter negates precisely one of the chief instruments the Organization could have at its disposal to attain the objective we are setting for ourselves today: the use of the methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes set out in Chapter VI of the Charter.

Additionally, we support the Secretary-General's proposal that the Economic and Social Council hold a series of high-level meetings in its annual substantive segment to deal with the underlying causes of conflicts and the role of development in fostering conflict prevention in the long term. This should serve a starting point so that the Council can play its coordinating role in development without putting it at odds with the guiding role played by the General Assembly in conflict prevention.

We must recall that there is no consensus on the proper relationship between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. We also believe that we must examine with due reservations the paragraphs

and recommendations relating to disarmament contained in the Secretary-General's report. Likewise, the proposal to finance preventive measures from the regular budget must be considered carefully by the General Assembly. We would first have to have a clear idea of what specific preventive measures are at issue.

These are only a few preliminary ideas. I think it would be very productive for the criteria and measures proposed here to be compiled by the Secretariat to serve as the basis for a General Assembly discussion in the near future. They should also be made available to the other principal organs so they can take them into consideration when engaging in their own analysis of the issue.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.